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A REPUBLIC OR A MONARCHY FOR CHINA

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A brief outline can now be given of the new agitation for a monarchy. A definite decision has not yet been reached whether China shall have a monarchy or whether she shall continue as a republic. Neither is it determined whether, in case of a monarchy, the Emperor shall be Yuan Shih-k'ai or the Boy-Emperor, Hsuan Tung, of the Manchu family. Were it not for the intrusion of Japan, aided by Great Britain, Russia, France and Italy—all monarchical governments except one—China would ere this have been transformed into a monarchy with Yuan Shih-k'ai on the throne. Had it not been for this intrusion, plainly indicating a temper of mind and a strong preference of outside Powers, it is doubted if a new revolution, or more properly a rebellion, would have been undertaken.

Going back a little to the first revolution, it may be remarked that while there was quite a general desire to get rid of the House of Ching, as being an alien rule, the desire for a republic was that only of the advanced thinkers who had received western education. There was never any proper body, representing the whole people, to decide in favor of a republic. The election, moreover, of members of the two Houses of Parliament was not as open and free as in previous elections conducted under Manchu rule. These Parliamentarians proved, not the adaptability of representative government, but their personal unfitness and the prematurity of the new republican system. When a clash came between the President, and these Parliamentarians, and the former, in true dictatorial style, turned out the latter, a large portion of the people offered no objection. Since then, China has not been under a republic, but under a dictatorship. The out-and-out repub-

licans are therefore right in saying that "the republic has never been tried."

Some two years ago there was a feeble agitation in favor of reverting to the former monarchy, but so arranged that it would be gradually transformed into something Chinese rather than Manchu. This scheme met with but little favor from the advocates of the republic or the supporters of President Yuan, and hence soon died away.

In the autumn of last year a new and much stronger agitation arose in favor of a monarchy, and specially of Yuan as the first Emperor. It may be said that eight-tenths of the people care only for quietness and protection, and take no interest in political discussions as to form of State. Of the other two-tenths, probably the majority have inclined to a monarchical system, as something with which they were acquainted, but have not altogether liked the idea of Yuan Shih-k'ai going back on his promises to stand by the republic and being made an Emperor. If he had plainly declared that he could not be Emperor, but was willing, in case a monarchy was really wanted, to help the young Emperor, still living in the Palace, to carry on the affairs of State, he would have commanded more respect, and possibly would have warded off both the intrusion of Japan and the attempt at revolution.

The minority of the two-tenths of the people have probably been about equally divided into two antagonistic classes, the one strongly supporting Yuan and no other as Emperor, and the other strongly supporting the Republic, with Yuan out of the whole business. This is the deduction we make from our acquaintance with Chinese thought, more generally expressed in whispers than on the house-top.

One thing is clear as the light of day, and that is, that China could in her own fashion settle this question and terminate the revolution, if she were left to herself. The danger to China's existence is from without. This incident has afforded Japan an opportunity to intermeddle, and, to use a military expression, to advance her line of attack. If this incident had not arisen, Japan would soon have found some other opportunity equally convenient to her purposes of aggression.

There is much to be criticised in Chinese behaviour, as in the way the government ascertained "the will of the people," but the criticism is less deserved than that which might be extended to Japan and her Allies.

It may be noted in this connection, that only one side of the nations now at war have presumed to interfere in China's internal politics. The other side, along with the neutral Governments of the United States, Holland, Spain, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, have stood aside, allowing China to manage her own affairs. China is not Mexico or Hayti or some other small State, but a great nation with splendid religious, philosophic, and political ideas, and the inferior of Japan only in respect to militarism and navalism. The question, "A Republic or a Monarchy for China?" is thus put to the test, not by her own people, but by outsiders and busy-bodies. Hence, not only has the Emperor-elect issued a mandate for postponement of the enthronement, but the keen interest taken by one set of the warring nations in democracy, and the character of the new uprising, puts in the background all mere theorizing as to what is best and most adaptable. We are still in doubt whether China will be a republic or a monarchy.